HELEN KELLER AND DR. BELL

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Helen Keller and Dr. Bell

The following is a stenographic transcript of part of a broadcast by George Carson Putnam over WOR *and the Mutual Broadcasting System on March 3:*

"Everybody knows the story of Helen Keller, the girl who lost her sight and hearing at the age of 19 months. Miss Keller is now 67 years of age. When she was seven, Anne Sullivan Macey went down to the little town in Alabama where Helen lived in a tight little world all of her own, unable to see, unable to hear, unable to talk—alive, but yet not really living. Anne Sullivan Macey was Helen Keller's teacher from 1887 until the day of her death in 1936.

"In that time, Helen Keller has won worldwide fame and has probably met more of the world's truly great than any other living person. Well, last Friday I telephoned Helen Keller's residence up in Westport, Connecticut. I talked with Polly Thompson, that wonderful Scottish lady who's been Miss Keller's constant companion for almost half her life . . . and she said they'd be glad to come to the studio and talk with me.

"Meeting Helen Keller is one of the greatest thrills I've ever experienced . . . and here's how we had our interview. Polly Thompson holds Helen Keller's right hand, and her quick fingers spell out each question by touch, and then the smiling Helen Keller raises her face and answers in a speech somewhat halting, but quite understandable as one becomes accustomed to it. Well, we discussed what we were going to say . . .

"To open the transcribed interview I turned to Polly and asked:

Transcription

"'Miss Thompson, how long have you been a companion to Helen Keller?"

MISS THOMPSON: "Thirty-two years."

MR. PUTNAM: "I understand that Alexander Graham Bell was instrumental in aiding Miss Keller many years ago."

MISS THOMPSON: "Yes, he was, Mr. Putnam."

MR. PUTNAM: "Will you tell us about it, Miss Thompson?"

MISS THOMPSON: "Dr. Bell counseled Helen's father to write to the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston, asking if a teacher could be sent to her, and out of that suggestion came the light and the joy and accomplishments of Helen's life. Helen always called Dr. Bell her old friend. He often encouraged and advised Anne Sullivan Macey, Helen's teacher, in her work in teaching Helen to speak. What has endeared Dr. Bell most to Helen is the fact that his first wish while working on the telephone was to make the deaf hear, and Helen feels it would be a satisfaction to him on this anniversary if he could observe their ever increasing progress towards all-around education and normal living."

MR. PUTNAM: "Thank you very much, Miss Polly Thompson, companion to the famed Helen Keller, and thank you, Helen Keller, very much."

(*End of Transcription*)

"As we finished the interview, gracious Helen Keller rose and took my hand. 'Mr. Putnam,' she said, 'I'll long remember this day. You see, it has a double significance to me, for just 60 years ago this third of March, Anne Sullivan Macey traveled to the little town in Alabama where I was living, and took me under her wing. So, you see, it's a double celebration for me. The 100th birthday of Dr. Bell and the 60th anniversary of Anne Sullivan, who led me by the hand into a world I never knew.'"

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